

PCTWORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

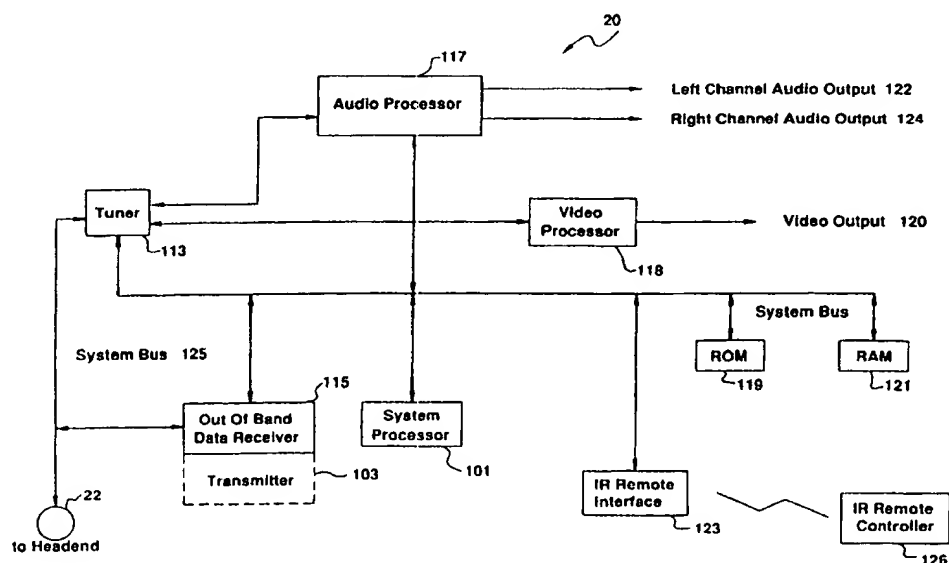
(51) International Patent Classification ⁶ : H04N 5/765	A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 98/23088
		(43) International Publication Date: 28 May 1998 (28.05.98)

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US97/21385

(22) International Filing Date: 19 November 1997 (19.11.97)

(30) Priority Data:
08/752,791 21 November 1996 (21.11.96) US(71) Applicant: NEXTLEVEL SYSTEMS, INC. [US/US]; 2200
Byberry Road, Hatboro, PA 19040 (US).(72) Inventor: MICHAUD, Ted, Richard; 3 Pleasant Mill Court,
Medford, NJ 08055 (US).(74) Agents: VOLPE, Anthony, S. et al.; Volpe and Koenig, P.C.,
400 One Penn Center, 1617 John F. Kennedy Boulevard,
Philadelphia, PA 19103 (US).(81) Designated States: AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR,
BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GE,
GH, HU, IL, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR,
LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ,
PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR,
TT, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, KE,
LS, MW, SD, SZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY,
KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH,
DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT,
SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, ML,
MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).**Published***With international search report.**Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the
claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of
amendments.*

(54) Title: INFRARED BLASTER CONTROL SYSTEM IN CABLE TELEVISION COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS



(57) Abstract

A system for delivering selective VCR control codes to programmable settop terminals (20) over a CATV communication system (22) includes a headend (12) for storing and transmitting VCR control code information to the settop terminals and a plurality of settop terminals for receiving the control codes. The CATV communication system delivers the VCR control codes to individual subscribers within the vertical blanking interval of one of the broadcast channels or over a control datachannel. A set-up procedure is required for each VCR to determine the appropriate set of VCR control codes. Upon determining the specific type of VCR the subscriber has, the VCR control codes transmitted through the CATV system are stored in the settop terminal in non-volatile memory. Since the settop terminal only stores the VCR control codes for a single type of VCR, memory requirements are minimized.

FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AL	Albania	ES	Spain	LS	Lesotho	SI	Slovenia
AM	Armenia	FI	Finland	LT	Lithuania	SK	Slovakia
AT	Austria	FR	France	LU	Luxembourg	SN	Senegal
AU	Australia	GA	Gabon	LV	Latvia	SZ	Swaziland
AZ	Azerbaijan	GB	United Kingdom	MC	Monaco	TD	Chad
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GE	Georgia	MD	Republic of Moldova	TG	Togo
BB	Barbados	GH	Ghana	MG	Madagascar	TJ	Tajikistan
BE	Belgium	GN	Guinea	MK	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	TM	Turkmenistan
BF	Burkina Faso	GR	Greece			TR	Turkey
BG	Bulgaria	HU	Hungary	ML	Mali	TT	Trinidad and Tobago
BJ	Benin	IE	Ireland	MN	Mongolia	UA	Ukraine
BR	Brazil	IL	Israel	MR	Mauritania	UG	Uganda
BY	Belarus	IS	Iceland	MW	Malawi	US	United States of America
CA	Canada	IT	Italy	MX	Mexico	UZ	Uzbekistan
CF	Central African Republic	JP	Japan	NE	Niger	VN	Viet Nam
CG	Congo	KE	Kenya	NL	Netherlands	YU	Yugoslavia
CH	Switzerland	KG	Kyrgyzstan	NO	Norway	ZW	Zimbabwe
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	NZ	New Zealand		
CM	Cameroon			PL	Poland		
CN	China	KR	Republic of Korea	PT	Portugal		
CU	Cuba	KZ	Kazakstan	RO	Romania		
CZ	Czech Republic	LC	Saint Lucia	RU	Russian Federation		
DE	Germany	LI	Liechtenstein	SD	Sudan		
DK	Denmark	LK	Sri Lanka	SE	Sweden		
EE	Estonia	LR	Liberia	SG	Singapore		

**INFRARED BLASTER CONTROL SYSTEM IN
CABLE TELEVISION COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

5 This invention relates generally to cable television (CATV) communications systems. More specifically, the invention pertains to a system and method for delivering selective infrared blaster VCR control codes to settop terminals over a CATV communication network.

10 **Description of Related Art**

CATV operators typically provide their consumers with a settop terminal, which is the interface between the CATV communication network and the consumer's television. Although most of today's televisions and VCRs are "cable ready" and have broadband tuners able to tune to the entire CATV spectrum, settop terminals are still required for a consumer to access all of the services offered by the CATV provider. Settop terminals are used to descramble premium service channels, enable viewing of pay-per-view events and facilitate interactive communications with the headend of the CATV communication system.

20 The use of settop terminals, however, creates difficulties for many consumers and often results in frustration for consumers due to the inconvenience of using the settop terminals in conjunction with a consumer's other home entertainment devices. For example, in order for a consumer to use their VCR to record a program being transmitted over the CATV system, the consumer must typically

25

-2-

coordinate the settings of the VCR, the television and the settop terminal. If any of these components are not set correctly, i.e. turned on and tuned to the correct channel, the attempt at recording the program will be unsuccessful.

5 The consumer is also faced with utilizing three different remote controls; one for the settop terminal, one for the VCR and one for the television. This can be very frustrating and confusing for consumers.

Manufacturers of CATV settop terminals have attempted to simplify the coordination of these electronic components and ease the burden on consumers by providing settop terminals which directly control a VCR. This is typically performed by incorporating an infrared (IR) blaster, essentially an IR transmitter, into the settop terminal which transmits control instructions from the settop terminal to the VCR. The level of complexity for the consumer is substantially reduced since only the settop terminal must be controlled. Using a single IR remote control, the consumer can switch television channels, program the VCR and perform many other tasks in a simplified manner.

10
15
20

There are several drawbacks to current settop terminals which include an IR blaster. One of the primary drawbacks is that there are many different types of VCRs and a correspondingly large number of different control codes. To be compatible with all VCRs, each settop terminal must include a library of VCR control codes for all VCRs. This requires a large memory within the settop terminal to store a database of all VCR control codes. Since the price of memory is a

25

-3-

large percentage of the cost of a settop terminal, a large memory directly contributes to the increased costs of a settop terminal. It has become imperative to reduce the amount of required memory in order to reduce the overall costs of settop terminals.

A second drawback to current settop terminals is that the database of VCR control codes is static. After the settop terminal is manufactured and the memory programmed, the data is fixed as of that date. The information becomes obsolete as new VCRs with different control codes are manufactured. A settop terminal will be unable to control VCRs which utilize new or different VCR control codes manufactured after the programming of the settop terminal.

Accordingly, there exists the need for a settop terminal which efficiently utilizes memory and which includes a dynamic VCR control code database.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a system and method of delivering selective VCR control codes to programmable settop terminals over a CATV communication system. The CATV communication system delivers the VCR control codes to individual subscribers through their settop terminals. A set-up procedure is required for each VCR to determine the appropriate set of VCR control codes. Upon determining the specific type of VCR the subscriber has, the VCR control codes transmitted through the CATV system are stored in the settop terminal in non-volatile memory. Since the settop terminal

-4-

only stores the VCR control codes for a single type of VCR, the memory requirements are minimized.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a CATV settop terminal which efficiently utilizes memory by receiving VCR control codes over a CATV communication network.

Other objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art after reading the detailed description of a presently preferred embodiment.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a simplified view of a CATV transmission network;

Figure 2 is a headend made in accordance with the teachings of the present invention;

Figure 3 is a settop terminal made in accordance with the teachings of the present invention;

Figure 4 is the graphical user interface;

Figure 5 is a flow diagram of the preferred embodiment of the settop terminal initialization procedure;

Figures 6A and 6B are flow diagrams of the VCR validation procedure;

Figure 7 is a flow diagram of the VCR program procedure; and

Figure 8 is a flow diagram of an alternative embodiment of the settop terminal initialization procedure.

-5-

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The preferred embodiment will be described with reference to the drawing figures wherein like numerals represent like elements throughout.

5 A CATV communication system 10 embodying the present invention is shown in **Figure 1**. The communication system 10 comprises one or more information providers 14 which communicate via satellite uplinks 23 with a plurality of headends 12. Each headend 12, in turn, communicates with a
10 plurality of settop terminals 20 which are located in the home of a consumer. The settop terminal 20 receives transmissions from the headend 12 through the CATV transmission network 22. The transmission network 22 may comprise a standard coaxial
15 network, a hybrid fiber-coax network or a "wireless cable" network employing microwave antennas and receivers. The settop terminal 20 provides the interface between the consumer's television 21 and the communication system 10.

Referring to **Figure 2**, a headend 12 made in accordance with the teachings of the present invention is shown. The
20 headend 12 receives video, audio and data content from remote service providers 14 and retransmits this information over the CATV transmission network 22 in a manner that is well known to those of skill in the art. The headend 12 may also be the origination source of local program content. It should be
25 apparent to those skilled in the art that the headend 12 of a CATV system includes many components which are outside the scope of this invention. The foregoing description will only

-6-

include a detailed description of the components relevant to the present invention.

In accordance with the present invention, the headend 12 includes a microprocessor 100 which is coupled to an electronic storage device 102 such as a PC hard drive, or any other suitable type of memory, and a data transceiver 112. The storage device 102 includes a database of information related to all VCRs including manufacturers 104, model numbers 106 and the corresponding VCR control codes 108, 110. The data transceiver 112 is further coupled with a data inserter 114 which combines the data with the video audio and data content 116 for transmission to consumers over the CATV network 22. The database of VCR information is continually or periodically updated by downloading current data into via a modem (not shown) or a floppy disk.

Referring to **Figure 3**, a settop terminal 20 made in accordance with the present invention is shown. The settop terminal 20 includes a system processor 101, a tuner 113, a data receiver 115, video and audio processors 117, 118, two types of memory 119, 121 and an IR remote interface 123. A system bus 125 facilitates communications between components within the settop terminal 20.

The data receiver 115 provides a data interface between the control system processor 101 and the CATV headend 12. The data receiver 115 receives out-of-band downstream data transmissions over a data-only channel, typically known as the control data channel (CDC), from the headend 12. Optionally, the data receiver 115 may be coupled with a data transmitter

-7-

103 which permits transmission of communications upstream from the settop terminal 20 to the headend 12 if interactive communications are desired.

5 The system processor 101 provides overall control of the settop terminal 20. The system processor 101 receives start up functions from the read only memory (ROM) 119 upon power-up and stores data, control information, and any executable instructions or programs sent from the headend 12 in the random access memory (RAM) 121. As will be explained in
10 detail hereinafter, control information from the headend 12 includes the VCR control codes which are stored in RAM 121.

The tuner 113 is responsive to the frequency of the channel selected by the consumer to remove the carrier signal. Audio and video content is processed through the audio
15 processor 117 and the video processor 118, respectively, in a manner which is well known to those skilled in the art. The baseband video signal is typically placed on a second carrier frequency corresponding to television channels 3 or 4 to provide a video output 120. Left and right channel audio
20 outputs 122, 124 are also provided for input into a stereo (not shown) or the audio inputs of a consumer's television 21, if so equipped.

Data is transmitted from the headend 12 to the settop terminal 20 in the following manner. The headend 12
25 continuously transmits the entire database of information relating to VCR manufacturers 104, model numbers 106, control data 108 and programming data 110 in a repeating data stream. Preferably, the data stream is inserted by the data inserter

- 8 -

14 within lines 20 or 22 of the vertical blanking interval (VBI) of programs transmitted over a specific broadcast channel. The settop terminal 20 extracts the data from the VBI for further processing as will be described in detail hereinafter. Alternatively, the data may be transmitted within the VBI of all broadcast channels, or over the out-of-band CDC channel. When the CDC is utilized to transmit the VCR control codes information, the data receiver 115 extracts the data for further processing.

10 A consumer utilizes the system of the present invention upon initial installation of the VCR. Operation of the settop terminal 20 is simplified through the use of a graphical user interface (GUI) which displays all of the available choices on the television screen and prompts the consumer to select among the available choices as shown in **Figure 4**. The use and operation of GUIs are well known to those of skill in the art. The consumer scrolls through the available choices by using the IR remote controller 126, and makes a selection using the buttons on the IR remote controller 126. Alternatively, choices may be input using a touchpad (not shown) located externally on the settop terminal 20. If a consumer desires to initialize the settop terminal 20 for a new VCR or reinstall the program for an existing VCR, option 1 must be selected.

25 Referring to **Figure 5**, the procedure 200 for setting up the settop terminal 20 for a specific VCR in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention is shown. As the headend 12 continuously transmits the VCR control codes

-9-

(step 201), the consumer selects the "SET-UP NEW VCR" option from the main option menu shown in **Figure 4 (step 202)**. The settop terminal 20 must then access the VCR data stream. If the data is embedded within the VBI, the settop terminal 20
5 tunes to the broadcast channel wherein the data is embedded (step 203). The settop terminal 20 then extracts the set-up procedure and the list of manufacturers from the data stream (step 204). The set-up procedure is a routine that the settop terminal 20 implements in order to download the VCR control
10 codes 108, 110. After this information has been downloaded into RAM 121, the settop terminal 20 displays a list of VCR manufacturers 104 and prompts the consumer to select the manufacturer of the consumer's VCR (step 206). The consumer selects the appropriate manufacturer (step 208) and the settop
15 terminal 20 extracts, from the data stream, the list of model numbers 106 and corresponding VCR control codes 108, 110 for the manufacturer selected by the consumer (step 210). Since the list of manufacturers 104 is no longer needed, the list of model numbers 106 and corresponding VCR control codes 108,
20 110 overwrites the manufacturer information, thus conserving the amount of required RAM 121. The list of model numbers 106 is displayed to the consumer and the consumer is prompted by the settop terminal 20 to select the appropriate model number for their VCR (step 212). The consumer selects the
25 appropriate model number (step 214) and the settop terminal 20 saves only the VCR control codes 108, 110 for the selected VCR model number (step 216).

-10-

The settop terminal 20 enters a VCR control code validation procedure (**step 218**) which confirms that the consumer has selected the proper manufacturer and model number for their VCR. This will be explained in detail hereinafter with reference to **Figures 6A** and **6B**. If the consumer does not know the model number of their VCR, the consumer may select the first choice and enter the VCR validation procedure (**step 218**) to determine if their selection is correct. If the selection is incorrect, the consumer may return to **step 212** and select one of the other available choices for that manufacturer. Although this method may be cumbersome, it provides an option for consumers who are unable to locate the model number. In a first alternative embodiment, which further conserves the amount of required RAM 121 and ROM 119, the list of manufacturers 104 and model numbers 106 may be extracted by the settop terminal 20 in smaller groups. For example, the first ten manufacturers 104 may be loaded into RAM 121. When the consumer confirms that the displayed list of VCR manufacturers 104 does not include the manufacturer of their VCR, the next ten manufacturers 104 are then extracted and loaded into RAM 107. The model numbers 106 may also be extracted in small groups and treated in the same manner.

In a second alternative embodiment, the settop terminal 20 may simply prompt the consumer to input the manufacturer 104 and model number 106, thus eliminating the need for a lengthy procedure to extract the manufacturer 104 and model number 106 information.

-11-

Referring to **Figures 6A and 6B**, the procedure (**step 300**) for validating the VCR control codes **108, 110** in accordance with the present invention is shown. The settop terminal **20** first instructs the consumer to insert a tape into the VCR and turn the VCR off (**step 302**). The settop terminal **20** transmits the "VCR ON" control code to the VCR (**step 304**). The settop terminal **20** queries whether the VCR has been turned on (**step 306**) and the consumer selects YES or NO to confirm or deny that the VCR has been turned on (**step 308**). If YES has been selected (**step 310**); the settop terminal **20** transmits a "TUNE VCR CHANNEL" control code to tune the VCR to a selected channel (**step 312**). The settop terminal **20** queries whether the VCR has been correctly tuned (**step 314**) and the consumer selects YES or NO to confirm or deny that the VCR has been tuned to the selected channel (**step 316**). If YES has been selected (**step 318**), the settop terminal **20** transmits a "START RECORDING" control code to the VCR (**step 320**). The settop terminal **20** queries whether the VCR has started recording (**step 322**) and the consumer selects YES or NO to confirm or deny that recording has begun (**step 324**). If YES has been selected (**step 326**), the settop terminal **20** transmits a "STOP RECORDING" control code to the VCR (**step 328**). The settop terminal **20** queries whether the VCR has ceased recording (**step 330**) and the consumer again selects YES or NO to confirm or deny that recording has ceased (**step 332**). If YES has been selected (**step 334**), the settop terminal **20** transmits a "VCR OFF" control code to the VCR (**step 336**). The settop terminal **20** queries whether the VCR has turned off (**step 338**) and the

-12-

consumer selects YES or NO to confirm or deny that the VCR has been turned off (**step 340**). If YES has been selected, the procedure has been successfully completed and VCR control codes are correct (**step 344**). If the consumer selects NO in response to any query, (**steps 310, 318, 326, 334 and 342**), the procedure is terminated (**step 346**) since the VCR control codes are incorrect for the particular VCR being installed are incorrect. If the consumer notes that the VCR has not performed each designated task, the consumer must return to the main selection menu and reset-up the VCR.

In accordance with the present invention, the settop terminal 20 and VCR are properly coordinated to record any programs selected by the consumer. The procedure for recording a program utilizing the settop terminal 20 (**step 400**) is shown in **Figure 7**. The consumer selects the "RECORD PROGRAM" option on the main selection menu as shown in **Figure 4 (step 402)**. The settop terminal 20 enters the record program routine (**step 404**) and prompts the consumer for the desired channel (**step 406**). The consumer enters the desired channel (**step 408**) and this channel is stored in the settop terminal 20 (**step 410**). The settop terminal 20 then prompts the consumer for time-on and time-off data (**step 412**) which the consumer enters (**step 414**) and the settop terminal 20 stores (**step 416**). The settop terminal 20 then prompts the consumer for the date of the desired recording (**step 418**). The consumer enters the date (**step 420**) and the settop terminal 20 stores the date (**step 422**). From this point, the tasks performed by the settop terminal 20 are transparent to

-13-

the consumer. On the selected date and time, the settop terminal 20 turns on the VCR, tunes the VCR to the selected channel and starts the VCR recording (**step 424**). At the end of the selected time, the settop terminal 20 stops the VCR recording and turns off the VCR (**step 426**).

The aforementioned embodiments may be implemented using a unidirectional CATV communication network, wherein communications are transmitted only from the headend 12 to the settop terminal 20. In a third alternative embodiment, an interactive system utilizes the bidirectional CATV communication network 22. In this embodiment, the microprocessor 100 within the headend 12 comprises an interactive server which responds to information requests by the settop terminal 20 and the data receiver 115 within the settop terminal 20 is coupled with a data transmitter.

Referring to **Figure 8**, the procedure 500 for interactively setting up the settop terminal 20 for a specific VCR in accordance with the third alternative embodiment of the present invention is shown. The consumer selects the "SET-UP NEW VCR" option from the main option menu shown in **Figure 4** (**step 502**). The settop terminal 20 requests a download of the set-up procedure and the list of manufacturers from the headend 12 (**step 504**). This information is transmitted to the requesting settop terminal 20 via an addressable data stream, either within the VBI or the CDC. After the information is downloaded into RAM 121, the settop terminal 20 displays a list of VCR manufacturers 104 and prompts the consumer to select the manufacturer of the consumer's VCR (**step 506**). The

-14-

consumer selects the appropriate manufacturer (**step 508**) and the settop terminal 20 requests the headend 12 to download the list of model numbers 106 for the manufacturer selected by the consumer (**step 510**). Since the list of manufacturers 104 is no longer needed, the list of model numbers 106 overwrites the list of manufacturers 104, thus conserving the amount of required RAM 121. The list of model numbers 106 is displayed to the consumer and the consumer is prompted by the settop terminal 20 to select the appropriate model number for their VCR (**step 512**). The consumer selects the appropriate model number (**step 514**) and the settop terminal 20 requests the headend 12 to download the VCR control codes 108, 110 for the selected VCR model number (**step 516**). Again, the VCR control codes 108, 110 overwrite the list of model numbers 106 which is no longer needed. The settop terminal 20 then enters a VCR validation procedure (**step 518**) which confirms that the consumer has input the proper manufacturer and model number for their VCR. This procedure was explained with reference to **Figures 6A** and **6B**. This interactive embodiment is particularly suited for situations wherein it is desirable to minimize the amount of data being downloaded over the CATV communication network 22 since the data is only transmitted from the headend 12 upon request of the settop terminal 20.

Although the invention has been described in part by making detailed reference to the preferred embodiment, such detail is intended to be instructive rather than restrictive. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that many variations may be made in the structure and mode of operation

-15-

without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as disclosed in the teachings herein.

*

*

*

-16-

What is claimed is:

1. A system for providing VCR control codes over a CATV communication system including a headend and at least one settop terminal, comprising:

a headend comprising:

5 means for storing a plurality of VCR control codes for a plurality of different VCRs; and

means for transmitting said plurality of VCR control codes over said CATV communication system; and

a settop terminal comprising:

10 means for receiving said plurality of transmitted VCR control codes;

means for inputting selections corresponding to one of said plurality of different VCRs; and

15 means for selecting and storing the VCR control codes from said plurality of received VCR control codes which correspond to said input selections.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein said means for transmitting said VCR control codes comprises a data transmitter for inserting said VCR control codes within the vertical blanking interval of a broadcast channel; and said
5 receiving means comprises a tuner for selectively tuning to said broadcast channel and reading said VCR control codes embedded within the vertical blanking interval.

-17-

3. The system of claim 2 wherein said settop terminal further comprises means for transmitting said stored VCR control codes to a VCR.

4. The system of claim 2 wherein said settop terminal further comprises means for transmitting said input selections to said headend; and said headend further comprises means for receiving said selections.

5. The system of claim 4 wherein said headend includes means for accessing information in response to said received selections and means for transmitting said accessed information to a settop terminal.

6. The system of claim 1 wherein said headend further includes means for transmitting said plurality of VCR control codes over a data channel.

7. The system of claim 6 wherein said settop terminal further includes means for receiving said plurality of VCR control codes over said data channel.

8. A settop terminal for use in a system which provides VCR control codes over a CATV communication system, the system including a headend having means for storing a plurality of VCR control codes for a plurality of different VCRs and means for transmitting said plurality of VCR control codes over said CATV communication system; the settop terminal comprising:

-18-

means for receiving said plurality of transmitted VCR control codes;

10 means for inputting selections corresponding to one of said plurality of different VCRs; and

means for selecting and storing the VCR control codes from said plurality of received VCR control codes which correspond to said input selections.

5 9. The settop terminal of claim 8 wherein said VCR control codes are transmitted within the vertical blanking interval of a broadcast channel and said settop terminal receiving means comprises a tuner for selectively tuning to said broadcast channel and reading said VCR control codes embedded within the vertical blanking interval.

10. The settop terminal of claim 9 wherein said settop terminal further comprises means for transmitting said stored VCR control codes to a VCR.

11. The settop terminal of claim 9 wherein said settop terminal further comprises means for transmitting said input selections to said headend.

12. The settop terminal of claim 8 wherein said VCR control codes are transmitted over a data channel and said settop terminal further comprises means for receiving said plurality of VCR control codes over said data channel.

-19-

13. A headend for use with a CATV communication network which provides VCR control codes to at least one settop terminal, the settop terminal including, means for receiving a plurality of VCR control codes and means for selecting and storing VCR control codes from said plurality of received VCR control codes; the headend comprising:

means for storing a plurality of VCR control codes for a plurality of different VCRs; and

means for transmitting said plurality of VCR control codes over said CATV communication system.

14. The system of claim 13 wherein said means for transmitting said VCR control codes comprises a data transmitter for inserting said VCR control codes within the vertical blanking interval of a broadcast channel.

15. The system of claim 14 wherein said settop terminal further includes means for transmitting said selections to said headend and said headend further comprises means for receiving said selections.

16. The system of claim 15 wherein said headend includes means for accessing information in response to said received selections and means for transmitting said accessed information to a settop terminal.

-20-

17. The system of claim 13 wherein said headend further includes means for transmitting said plurality of VCR control codes over a data channel.

18. A method for providing VCR control codes over a CATV communication system including a headend and at least one settop terminal, the method comprising:

storing at said headend a plurality of VCR codes for a plurality of different VCRs;

transmitting from said headend said plurality of VCR control codes over said CATV communication system;

receiving at said settop terminal said plurality of transmitted VCR control codes;

selecting VCR control codes from among said plurality of received VCR control codes; and

storing said selected VCR control codes.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein said transmitting step comprises inserting said VCR control codes within the vertical blanking interval of a broadcast channel.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein said receiving step further comprises selectively tuning to said broadcast channel and reading said VCR control codes embedded within the vertical blanking interval.

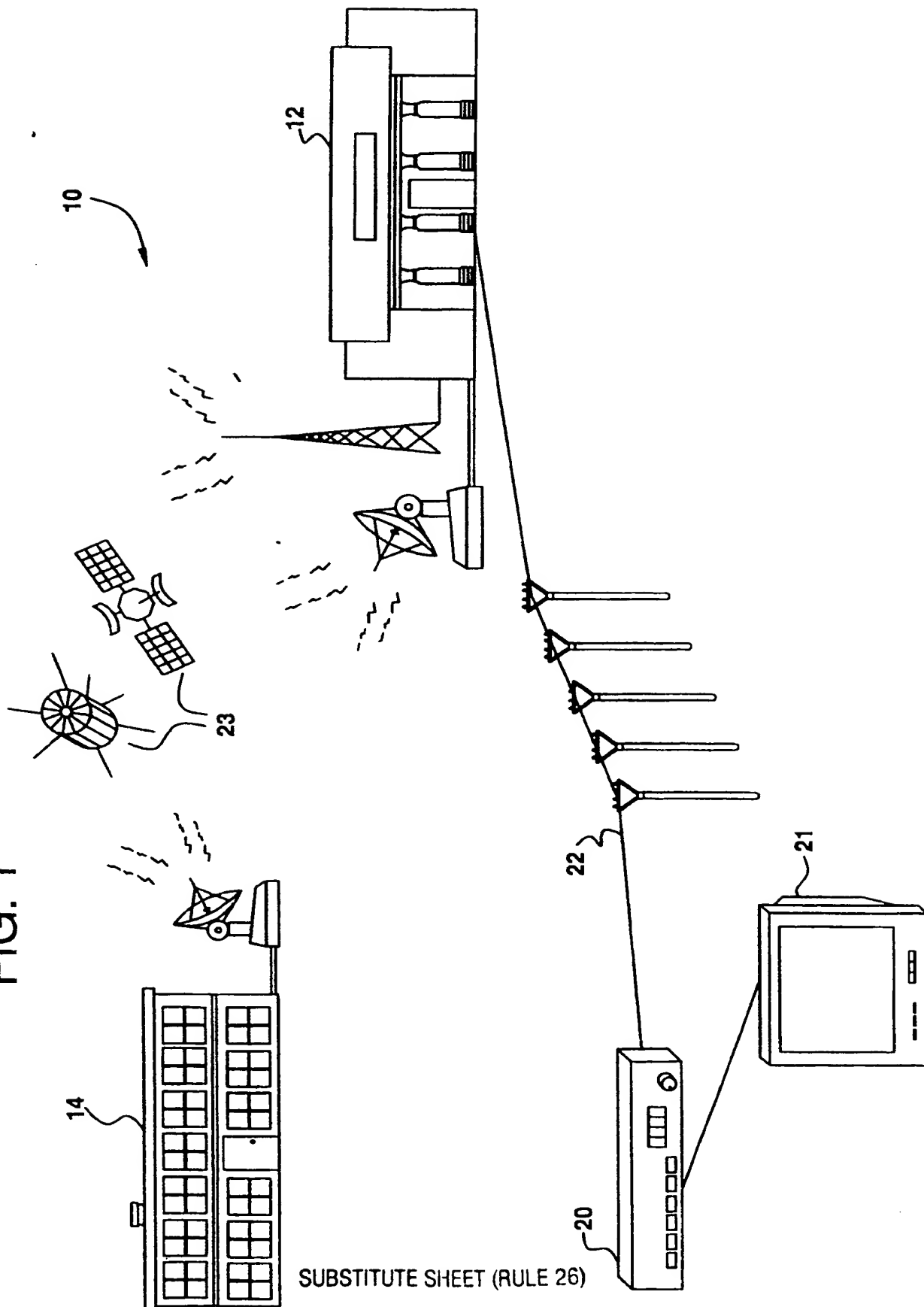
21. The method of claim 18 further comprising transmitting said stored VCR control codes to a VCR.

-21-

22. The method of claim 18 wherein said transmitting step comprises transmitting said plurality VCR control codes over a data channel.

1 / 9

FIG. 1



2 / 9

FIG. 2

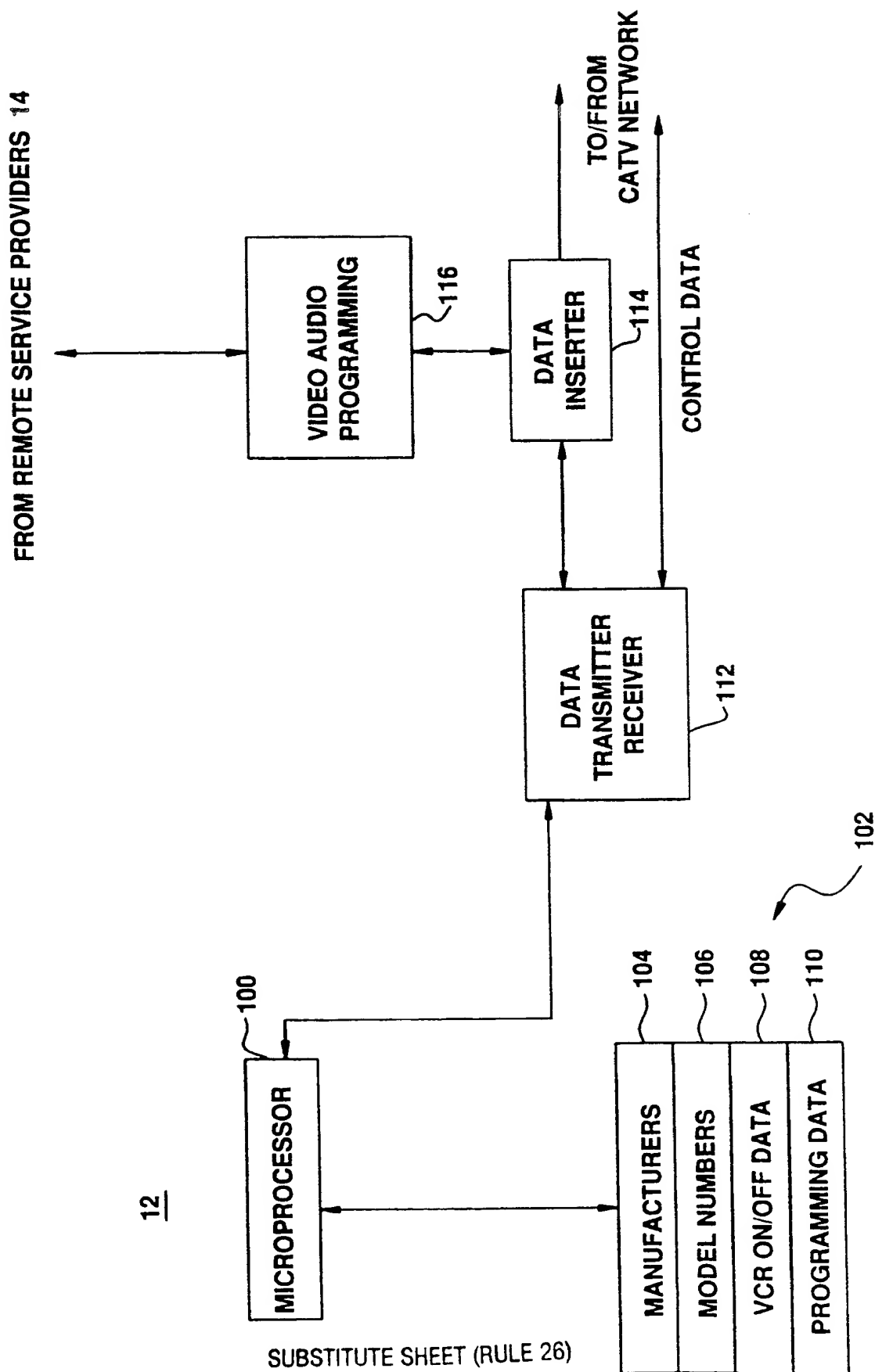
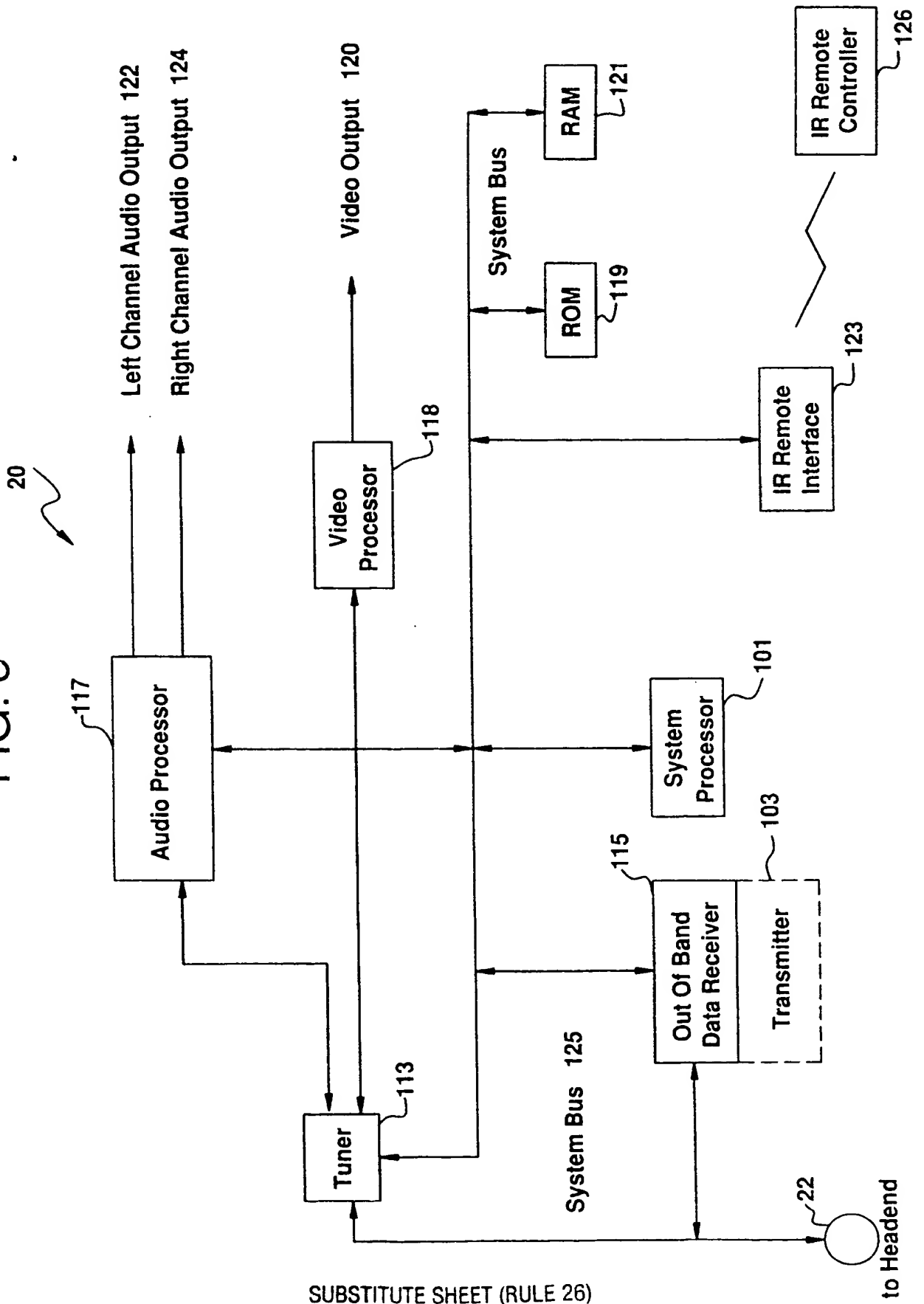


FIG. 3



4 / 9

FIG. 4

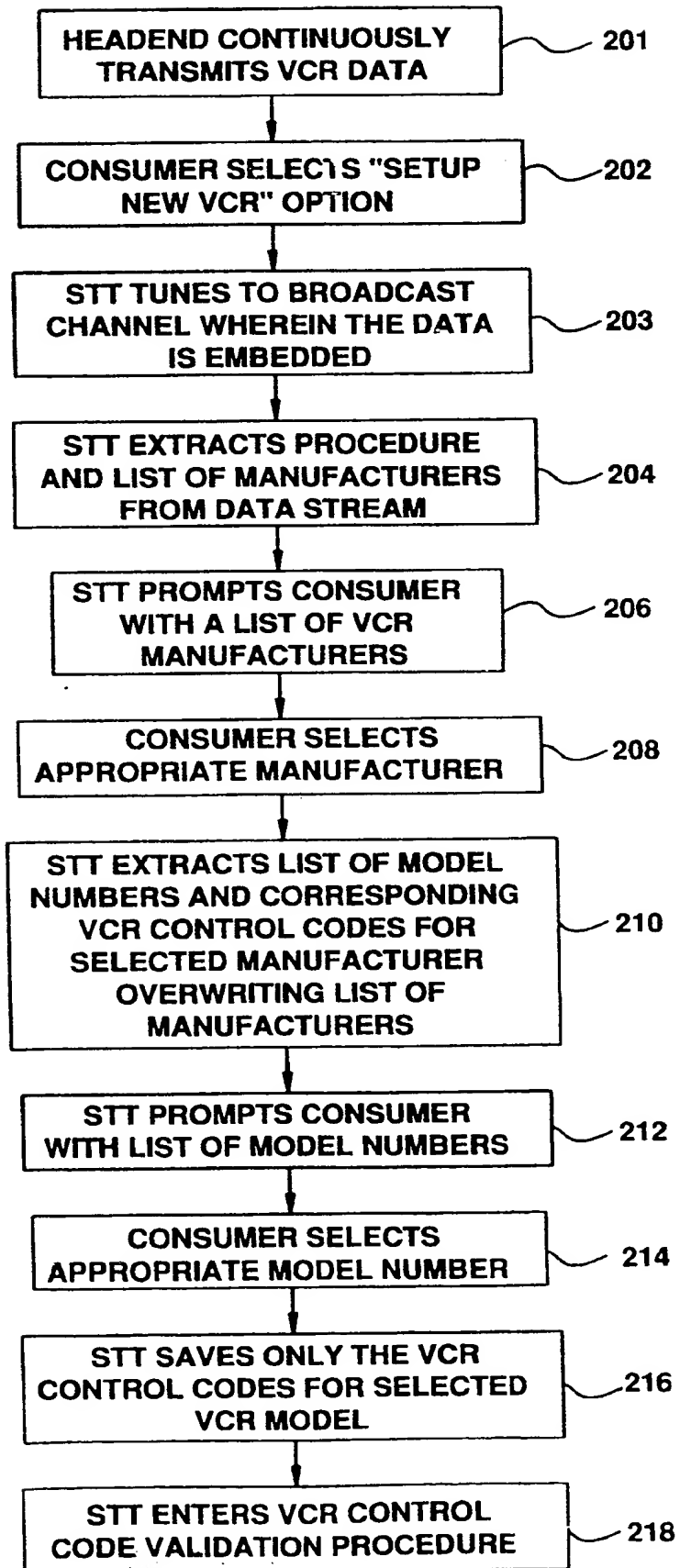
TV SET

**PLEASE SELECT FROM AMONG THE
FOLLOWING CHOICES.**

- 1) SETUP NEW VCR**
- 2) RECORD NEW PROGRAM**
- 3) OTHER**

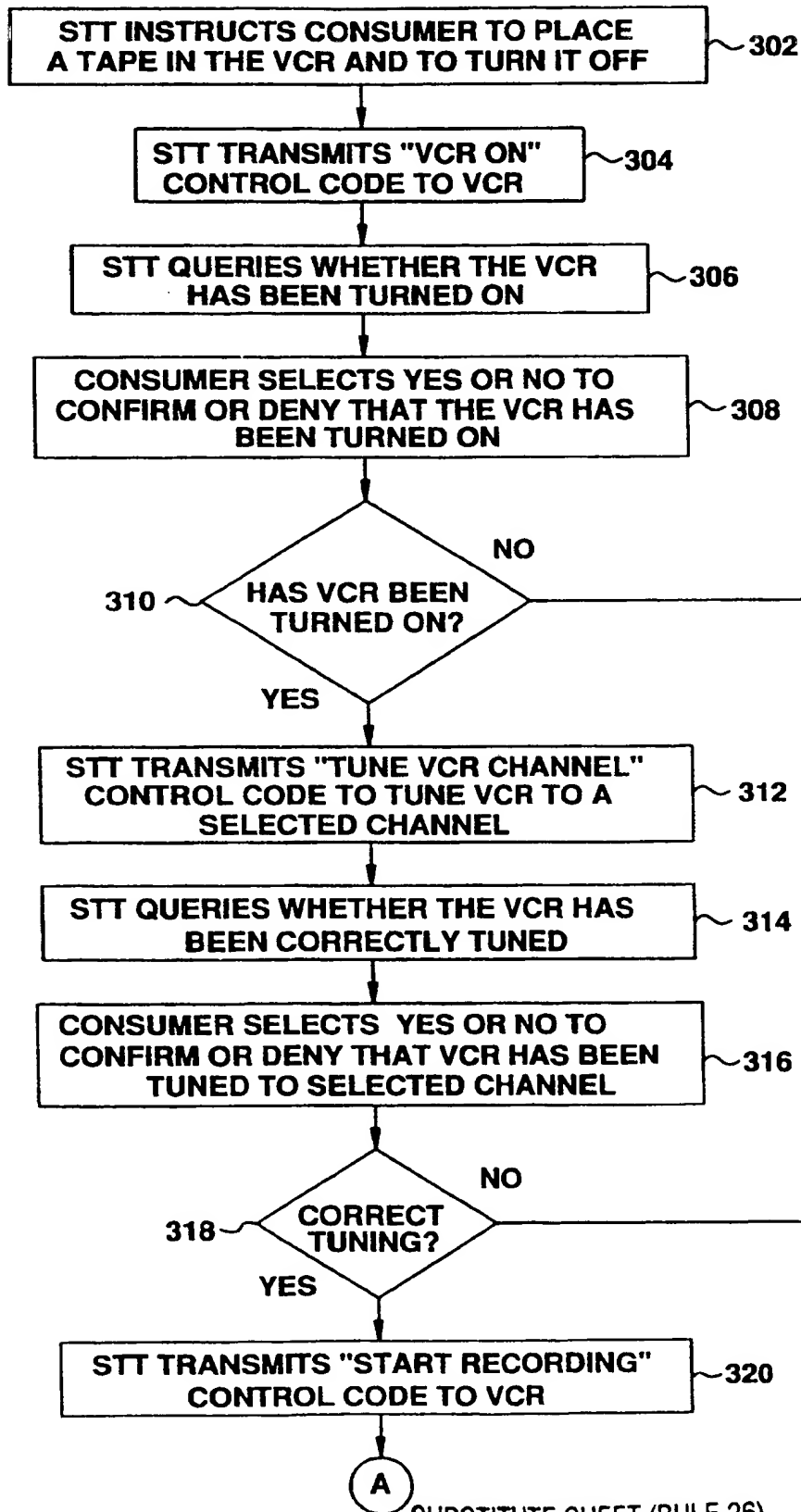
5 / 9

FIG. 5

200

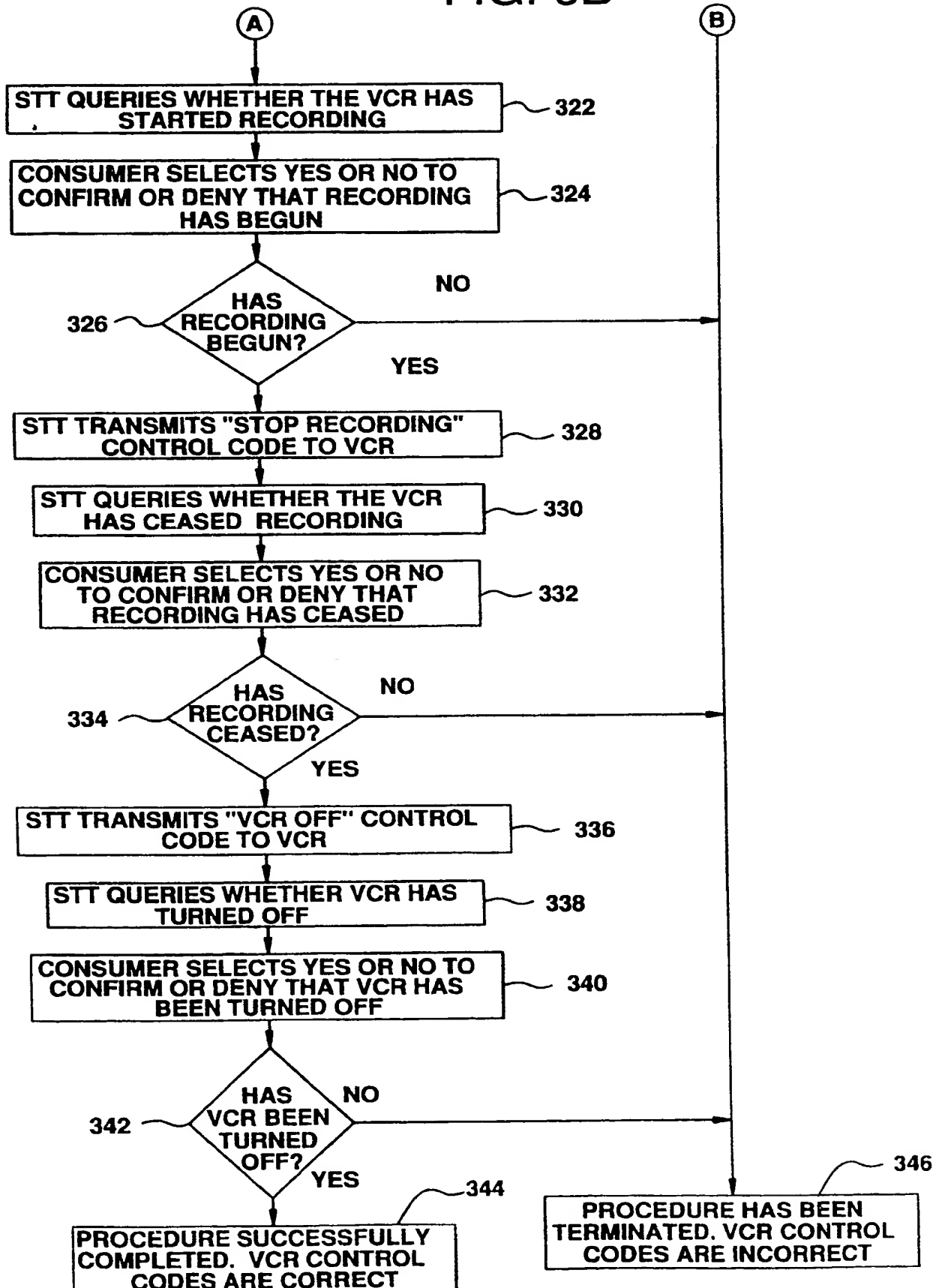
6 / 9

FIG. 6A



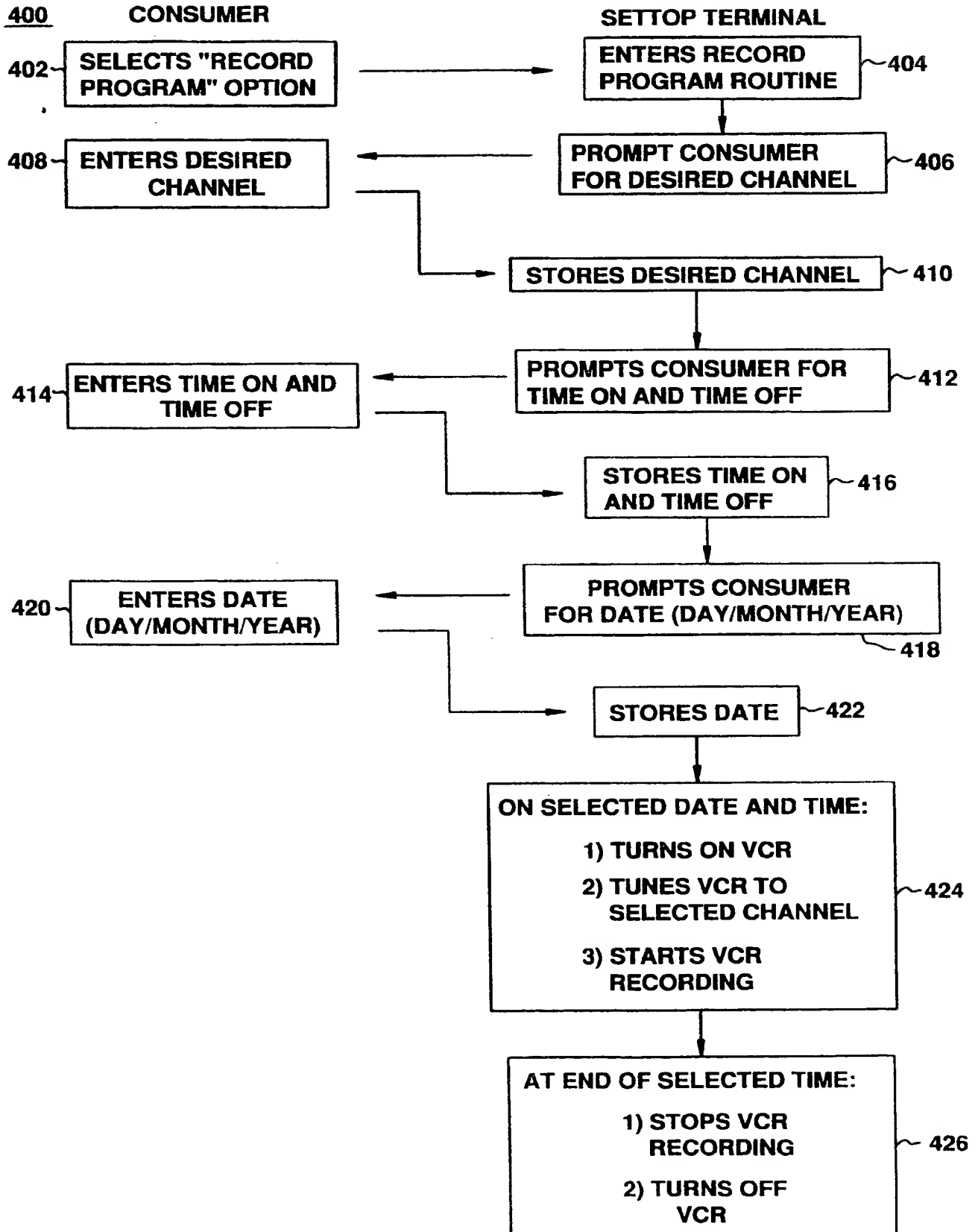
7 / 9

FIG. 6B



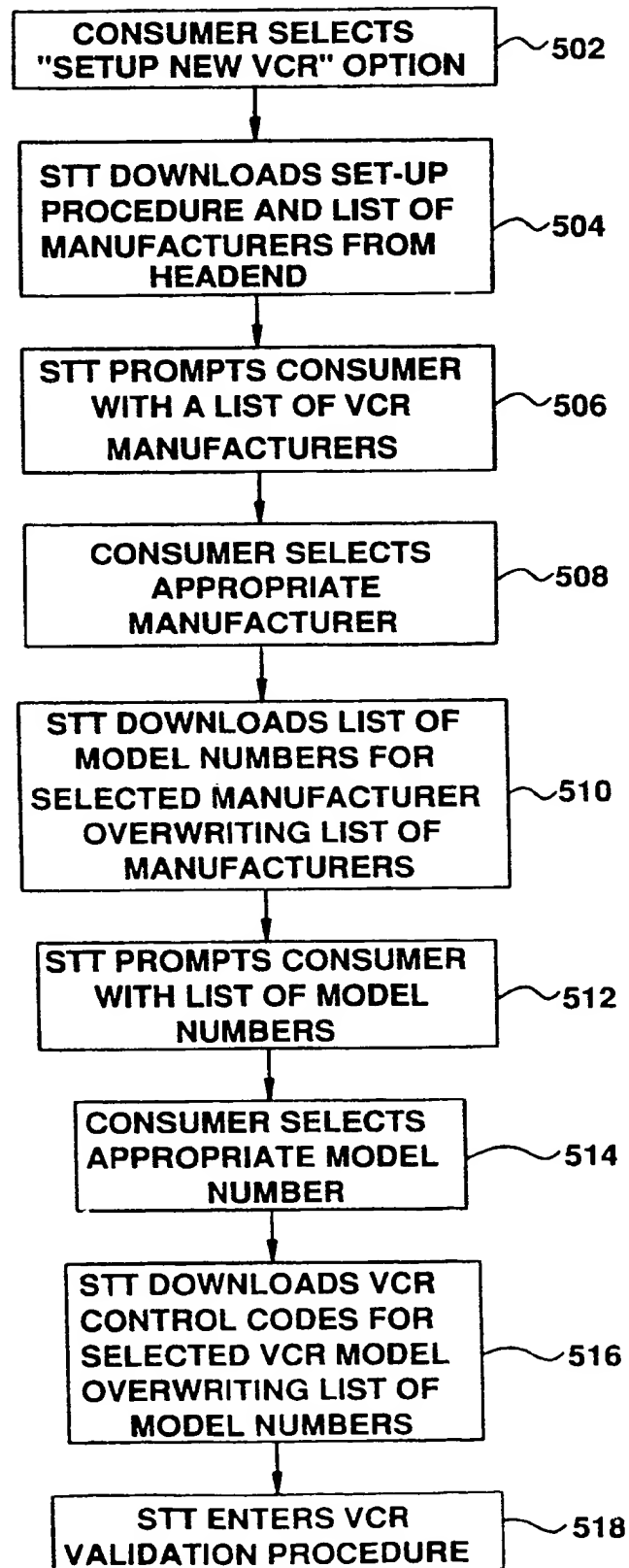
8 / 9

FIG. 7



9 / 9

FIG. 8

500

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/US 97/21385

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 6 H04N5/765

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 6 H04N

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5 410 326 A (GOLDSTEIN) 25 April 1995 see column 3, line 14 - column 18, line 22; figures 1, 1A, 10-14	1-22
A	US 5 414 756 A (LEVINE) 9 May 1995 see the whole document	1, 3-8, 10-13, 15-18, 21, 22
A	WO 94 17632 A (SMART VCR LIMITED PARTNERSHIP) 4 August 1994 see page 5, line 11 - page 8, line 25; figures 1, 6	1, 3, 8, 10, 13, 18, 21

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

17 March 1998

Date of mailing of the international search report

26/03/1998

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Verleye, J

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/US 97/21385

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 5410326 A	25-04-95	NONE	
US 5414756 A	09-05-95	NONE	
WO 9417632 A	04-08-94	US 5420647 A CA 2153888 A	30-05-95 04-08-94